

CHICAGO MAGAZINE AND FIRST BAPTIST HAMMOND

December 16, 2012 (David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org; for instructions about subscribing and unsubscribing or changing addresses, see the information paragraph at the end of the article)

A report in the *Chicago Magazine* for January 2013, which was published on December 15, 2012, is entitled “Let Us Prey: Big Trouble at First Baptist Church,” and it features ten cases of sexual crimes and fornications committed by pastors associated with the church.

These are Ted Butler, Christopher Settlemyer, Dave Hyles, Charles Shifflett, Joseph Combs, Chester Mulligan, William Beith, Craig Sission, Kerry Martin, and Jack Schaap, who was the pastor of the church until he was caught having a sexual relationship with a teenage girl.

Had they dug up just two more, which would not have been difficult, they could have labeled them “First Baptist’s Dirty Dozen.” In fact, it could have been “First Baptist’s Dozens and Dozens and Dozens” had the paper reported on the plague of adulterous Hyles Anderson graduates and First Baptist associates, but adultery doesn’t happen to be illegal in America today. It does disqualify a man from the pastorate, as the bishop must be blameless in such things (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6), though First Baptist associates have typically ignored this divine qualification.

The *Chicago Magazine* report documents the fact that the church’s late pastor, Jack Hyles, created a cultic climate in which church members were not allowed to test anything by God’s Word and horrible immoralities were routinely covered up.

For example, during a Sunday sermon, Hyles held up a cup bearing the image of the skull and bones, which is a warning that the contents are poisonous. He said to Johnny Colsten, one of the men sitting behind him on the platform, “I’d like for you, if you don’t mind, to drink this,” and Colsten did not hesitate to drink the potential cool-aid (“Let Us Prey: Big Trouble at First Baptist,” *Chicago Magazine*, January 2013).

The Lord knows *Chicago Magazine’s* motives and they will give account to him for their business, but it is pretty close to being right about First Baptist of Hammond. It is wrong, though, in implying that all independent Baptists are cultic.

Many fundamental Baptists have rejected Hyles and his cultic philosophy. I certainly have and I have been publicly exposing and separating myself from it for decades, at considerable personal cost. A pastor should be given honor and he should be followed as long as he follows the Bible, but he is not an authority unto himself. He is to be tested by God’s Word and is to be disciplined if he sins, just like anyone else in the congregation.

A genuine biblical pastor's job is not to keep the people in bondage to his own will, but it is to build them up on Christ and to present them to Christ as the servants of Christ, not of man.

First Baptist has laid off 25% of its staff and has a massive \$16 million dollar debt.

You see, First Baptist of Hammond is operated something like a circus and must be kept "pumped up" with promotionalism and carnal enthusiasm, and for that they need a new P.T. Barnum--and fast! We will see if they can find one. (See "Jack Schaap's Three-Ring Circus," Friday Church News Notes, August 6, 2010).

"Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear. I charge *thee* before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality" (1 Tim. 5:19-21).

(See "The Hyles Effect," a free eBook available from www.wayoflife.org.)

DEAR CHICAGO MAGAZINE

Chicago Magazine, you were well within your legal and moral rights to publish an expose about First Baptist Church of Hammond, Indiana ("Let Us Prey: Big Trouble at First Baptist Church," January 2013). We would agree with you that the church is cultic and spiritually unhealthy. We said it before you did (in articles and books going more than two decades).

But you are dealing with spiritual issues without the equipment to make proper judgments. Spiritual issues must be just judged by spiritual rules, and you don't know the rules. In fact, you have rejected the Spiritual Rule Book.

A church is not a cult because it preaches that Jesus Christ is the only Lord and Saviour and there is no salvation apart from the Cross, or because it preaches God's Word without apology, or because it preaches separated, holy living of those who name the name of Christ, or because it teaches the biblical pattern for marriage. If that is a cult, then massive numbers of America's churches have been cultic since its inception.

We judge First Baptist Church cultic, not because Jack Hyles was a "Bible thumper," as you labeled him, but because he didn't obey the Bible he thumped, not because he preached fire-and-brimstone, as you mentioned, but because he didn't walk in the fear of God in his own life and ministry.

Had he been a true Bible believer, he would have walked humbly and been a gracious shepherd of his people rather than a pompous abuser of them (1 Peter 5:1-6). He would have urged them to test him by God's Word rather than to have boasted of how they would jump off a bridge and drink poison at his command (Acts 17:11; 1 Corinthians 14:29; 1 Thessalonians 5:12). He would

have urged them to be more loyal to Christ than to man, to the Bible than human tradition. He would have disciplined them for sin rather than helped them cover it up (1 Corinthians 5).

That was Jack Hyles, and he will give account to God.

As for the *Chicago Magazine*, it, too, displays no fear of God. Had it feared God, it would have admitted that all men have hypocrisies, including its own writers and editors, and it would have balanced its report by proclaiming loudly the fact that there are hundreds of Bible-believing independent Baptist preachers who are humble, godly men who hate the hypocrisy and sin that has been rampant at First Baptist, and there are hundreds of Bible-believing independent Baptist churches that are spiritually healthy, where an individual can find Christ as eternal Saviour and can grow in Christ and find God's perfect will and that have no element of true cultism.

The *Chicago Magazine* would do well to remember that its writers and editors will give account to the same Almighty God as Jack Hyles, Jack Schaap, and any other present or past officer of First Baptist Church of Hammond.

Are they ready for this accounting?

I suspect the day will come when every individual associated with *Chicago Magazine* will wish that he had sought out the spiritual help of a sound Bible-believing Baptist church instead of having puffed at someone else's hypocrisy.

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